



EXECUTIVE COMPUTING

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New computer shorthand can speed up typing

Just announced is a new computer program that promises to painlessly increase the speed of everyone who types.

In fact, it not only increases your typing speed but improves your spelling and eliminates "typos" as well. Secretaries will love it. Input operators will love it. And I predict you'll love it, too.

The \$195 program is called **PRD+**, or "Productivity Plus," and will be available in computer stores in January. It runs on the IBM PC and compatible computers, and is loaded into your computer along with other programs you use on a daily basis. I tested a pre-release version supplied by the publisher, Productivity Software Int'l, New York, N.Y.

How it works

PRD+ works by reducing the number of keystrokes necessary during the data-entry process by using abbreviations that are instantly expanded into entire words, phrases, formulas and programming commands — even sentences and paragraphs up to 240 characters. Both the abbreviations and their long-form meanings are defined by the user and stored in an on-line dictionary.

For example, the three-line letter closing "Very truly yours, John S. Smith, President" (42 keystrokes), might be entered in word-processing applications as "vty" (three keystrokes); "year to date" (12 keystrokes) in spreadsheet applications can be replaced with "ytd" (three keystrokes); the DOS programming procedure "backup c:/lotus/newyr a:/s" (24 keystrokes) might be entered as "bk123" (five keystrokes).

As soon as you type the space after the abbreviation, it is *instantly* replaced with the long form. You don't have to stop and check or wait — it is done so fast that your normal typing

pace can proceed uninterrupted.

The program comes with a standard word list that contains hundreds of common abbreviations for items such as months and days, cities and states, the most commonly used words and the most commonly misspelled words. Some of the many phrases that appear useful include:

According to our conversation of — acon.

According to our records — arcd.

As soon as possible — asap.

Enclosed as promised — encp.

For your information — fyi.

It is my understanding — itund.

Regarding your letter of — reltr.

Thank you for your letter of — tkltr..

Create abbreviations quickly

Users can create their own abbreviations while working in an application program. Since both PRD+ and your application program (such as word processing) are loaded into memory at the same time, you don't have to exit one program to use the other. While working in your application program, commonly used technical terms, names or addresses could be entered and used with PRD+.

Imagine how much time you'd save if a complicated product description or a difficult chemical or medical name is entered just once, and from then on typed as a one- or two-letter abbreviation.

Additionally, you could develop your own shorthand to speed up typing even further. If you endeavor to memorize just one new abbreviation each day — "t" for "the," "n" for "not," "y" for "you," etc. — soon you'll have your own shorthand vocabulary.

Wave of the future

Just as typewriters, computers and word processing programs dramatically increased the productivity of office workers in the past, programs such as this one promise to bring about further change.

It won't be long, I predict, before someone invents a whole language of abbreviations — a "computer shorthand" — to take advantage of programs like PRD+. If a good training program to teach the computer shorthand became available, it could be taught in schools alongside typing as part of a student's preparation for office work.

But, according to Pepper Drebes, admissions director of the Denver Academy of Court Reporting, it's best not to overestimate the program. Her students take *two years* to learn a system of abbreviations for legal work. "An abbreviation does you no good at all if it causes a hesitation in writing it," she said.

She was enthusiastic, however, about the program's ability to type entire sentences or paragraphs from short abbreviations — something not done by the systems used by court reporters. And she conceded that even a small hesitation when typing an abbreviation for an entire paragraph would still be acceptable.

THE BOTTOM LINE: Should you rush out and buy PRD+ in January when it becomes available? I recommend that you do, especially if you've already invested \$3,000 or so for your IBM PC or compatible computer and software, and can see an application for it. (However, be sure to double-check with your computer dealer that it runs with the other programs regularly used.) The \$195 price is a small amount to pay for the increase in speed and productivity.

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